

Service being assessed	Well Being Services – Customer Services
Who will be involved in completing this assessment?	Miranda Lee, Service Manager Benefits, Customer Services & Bereavement
Date of Review	4 July 2011
Date of Next Review	4 July 2012
What is the purpose of the service?	<p>To provide a face-to-face, telephone and email customer response service on behalf other services within the Council.</p> <p>To carry out Housing Benefit Council Tax and Business Rates functions \ interviews.</p> <p>To provide a cashiering service.</p>
Is this assessment being undertaken because of changes to the service? If so what are they?	Assessment being undertaken as part of Council’s annual review of equalities information, not because of change to service/policy.
The purpose of this review is to understand how services can help the Council to meet its duties under Equalities legislation. The duties can be summarised as	The Customer Services team have recently been through a systems thinking / Lean thinking intervention which focused on what matters to the customer and on the principle of “getting things right first time”. This process treats each person as an individual and the service is designed to respond to their individual needs rather than trying to make them fit to our systems / processes.

1. Eliminate discrimination
2. Advance equality of opportunity
3. Foster good relations between different parts of the community

How does this service help the Council to do this, in particular in relation to the categories specifically mentioned in legislation - Race, Gender/Sex, Disability, Age, Religion/Belief, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy & Maternity and in respect of Duty 1 only – Marriage and Civil Partnerships?

All staff receive training on and have access to the Council's translation service, Intran, to use either face-to-face, over the telephone or to get written translations if required.

The team can also record whether the customer has any special requirements such as large print, Braille, hearing loop, etc but this information is only currently available within the Customer Services team / Revenue Services team.

A money advice service has recently been set up for both the public and staff to use and the advisor can provide advice on debt management, savings, pensions, mortgages, etc.

There are strong links with the Families First project, run by the DWP, which tackles intergenerational worklessness by providing practical help for people such as funds for transport to get to interviews, help with professional fees, etc.

The team often work together with Housing Options to ensure that the customer is seen just once rather than on two separate occasions to deal with their housing and benefit issues.

Housing Area Offices accept evidence required for benefit claims so people do not have to travel to the main Council building.

Wait times are monitored closely and agreements are in place with other Well Being teams to pull on staff to meet peak demand and keep waiting times to a minimum. Customers are now encouraged to make appointments rather than just queue to wait to see someone and this has improved customer satisfaction and reduced waiting times. The number of people who "walk out" without being seen has also dropped drastically.

Customers can contact us by text, email, via the website, by letter, telephone or face-to-face.

<p>How will you know that service is working as it should?</p>	<p>Feedback from GovMetric – this national service allows customers to record whether they were happy with the service, satisfied or unhappy and why. The GovMetric points are currently available in both main receptions and on the website.</p> <p>Customers are sometimes asked questions at the end of telephone enquiries about the standard of service they received during their call.</p> <p>Face-to-face survey carried out during the initial phases of the systems thinking / Lean intervention. This will be repeated during the next few weeks at our reception points.</p> <p>Feedback from other internal services / officers / Councillors.</p> <p>Service Level Agreements – targets being met.</p> <p>Number of complaints received.</p>
<p>What data have you used to help you make this assessment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Care Standards</li> <li>• Policies / procedures</li> <li>• Customer feedback</li> <li>• Officer / Councillor feedback</li> <li>• GovMetric reports</li> <li>• Performance information (calls offered which were answered, letters answered within Customer Care Standards, etc)</li> <li>• Service Level Agreements</li> <li>• Complaints</li> </ul>
<p>Is there any additional data that you need to collect to help in continuous improvement?</p>	<p>Face-to-face survey to be carried out within the next 4 weeks to update information gathered during initial Lean thinking intervention.</p>

<p>How have you ensured that this service has been designed from a customer's perspective and how have you involved customers in that process?</p>	<p>The Lean thinking intervention interviewed customers both over the telephone and face-to-face to find out what mattered to them and the service was redesigned from their responses.</p> <p>Team leaders within the Well Being department meet on a regular basis to share customer comments and issues and to review the service on offer / identify any trends that need to be dealt with.</p>
<p>Has any other consultation been carried out, including to ensure that we have taken into consideration the needs of those not currently using the service?</p>	<p>The Well Being team were recently involved in the annual Market Place event which raises awareness of all Council services to the public. The team also go on the annual Rural Bus run which offers a mobile information service around all the parishes / villages in the Borough.</p>
<p>What is, or what do you expect to be the impact of the way you work on different parts of the community, including those covered by equality legislation?</p>	<p><b>Who benefits?</b> All residents and businesses in the Borough who contact the Council.</p> <p><b>Who should be expected to benefit but don't – Why not?</b> Unfortunately sometimes there is not enough staff to handle call demand and people ring off without their query being dealt with first time.</p>
<p>On the basis of what you have found out, which of these options will you now follow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No major changes</li> <li>• Adjust the policy</li> <li>• <b>Continue the policy</b></li> <li>• Stop and remove the policy</li> </ul> <p>This is a review – not a new policy or service. As and when it is proposed to change the service or policies, new assessments will be completed.</p>

What now needs to be done and by who?	Face-to-face survey  Go-live of the DWP “Tell Us Once” project. Members of the public who register a death with the Registrar used to have to tell all public bodies separately of their bereavement. However, the Registrar will send a daily file to Customer Services who will share the information with the Community Housing Rent team, Housing Benefits and Council Tax, Elections and Sundry Debts. Previously the Registrar sent through the information.. It is hoped that the new service will help the recently bereaved.
Signed off by	Miranda Lee, Service Manager Benefits, Customer Services & Bereavement